



Detroit & Canada Tunnel Corporation

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TESTIMONY

**For the Joint Committee Meeting on the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) regarding the 5-Year Plan
Thursday April 7, 2005 - Marysville, MI**

**Submitted by Neal Belitsky
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Detroit & Canada Tunnel Corporation**

Good evening. My name is Neal Belitsky. I am the executive vice president and general manager of the Detroit & Canada Tunnel Corporation.

This year, the Detroit Windsor Tunnel celebrates its 75th Anniversary of protecting our nation and serving as a link to our nation's economic supply chain. For 75 years, we have facilitated the movement of people and goods across our border, to staff the emergency rooms of regional hospitals, deliver just-in-time goods and otherwise provide a link to two friendly nations.

The Detroit & Canada Tunnel Corporation is proud of its 75 years of history in Windsor and Detroit. The Detroit Windsor Tunnel is one of the busiest border crossings between the United States and Canada, and in recent years has serviced over 9 million vehicles per year. The Tunnel remains the only underwater international vehicular (automobile) tunnel in the world and is a vital socio-economic link between the United States and Canada. The facility was named Michigan's No. 3 civil engineering and No.10 construction projects of the 20th century.

The Tunnel accommodates approximately 5% of the Windsor-Detroit truck traffic. The majority of Tunnel traffic is local, commerce, recreation, and business originating and terminating in the Southeast Michigan tri-county and Windsor/ Essex area. The Tunnel accommodates approximately 5% of the Windsor-Detroit truck traffic. Passenger cars comprise 96% of the traffic, with annual traffic of approximately 7 million vehicles per year. Between 1993 and 2000 the Tunnel's total annual volume grew by approximately 3.0 million vehicles or by 46%. Recent political and economic conditions have reduced US Canadian land border travel at all crossings, with the Windsor Detroit region showing a decrease in passenger traffic in excess of 30%. New border regulations, regional attractions along with increases in commerce and the economy are leading to new emerging traffic patterns.

We support MDOT's vision for borders, which "provides for the seamless, safe and secure transport of goods, people and services in a cost-efficient and timely manner." (Transportation Commission Policy, October 2004).

We also support "Michigan's Current Goals for Borders," including:

1. Assure adequate transportation capacity
2. Protect and upgrade border facilities
3. Study needs to improve and expand facilities
4. Enhance collaboration, coordination and communication with stakeholder groups
5. Collaborate with partners
6. Increase federal funding for borders
7. Cooperate with agencies to improve the flow of trade while maintaining national security

However, we encourage the state to support each border crossing based on volume. As one of the busiest passenger border crossings in the Nation, the Tunnel provides a vital link for our state and nation's economy. Thousands of nurses, engineers and other workers pass through the Tunnel every day to work in Michigan. Millions of dollars of goods pass through the Tunnel regularly. The state cannot afford to neglect the Detroit Windsor Tunnel, while focusing on other crossings.

More specifically, the Tunnel recommends the state allocate resources to implement regional ITS as a way to address security and improve the facilitation of traffic. In addition, the state needs to create a comprehensive yet specific border to each crossing, agenda to submit to Congress. Congress looks to the state for an agenda to advocate in Washington and Michigan does not get its fair share of federal Border funds. A unified agenda that benefits the entire state, will garner support from Congress.

While we continue to support the state and share in its vision and priorities, we encourage this committee and the legislature, to seek the support of the Governor and MDOT in supporting every border crossing – Equally.

With the support of this committee and your colleagues in the House and Senate, the Tunnel and other border crossings can make our state stronger, with improved border infrastructure and processes. But it is important to focus on existing border crossings.

Based on data from the bi-national study group (a partnership between the U.S. & Canada, and Michigan and Ontario), it is unlikely that any new border crossing will be operable before 2013. The existing operators continue to work with the different levels of the US and Canadian government on maximizing both our facility as well as access.

We are committed to increasing capacity at the border crossings in our region and look forward to working in partnership with the state, Congress and the Department of Homeland Security in making that happen. As one of the busiest border crossings, we are determined to work collaboratively for the benefit of securing our nation, while facilitating the efficient flow of trade and travel across our region.

We would be more than happy to give you a personal briefing and tour at the Tunnel upon your next visit to Detroit. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions. And thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.